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DCI BRIEFING FOR SENATOR RUSSELL

19 May 1964

NORTH VIETNAM

- I. The Hanoi regime, although in some economic difficulty, appears to be stable and fully capable of sustaining, or even slightly expanding, the guerrilla wars in South Vietnam and in Laos.
  - A. Party and state chief Ho Chi Minh, who is 74, appears to be vigorous and in unchallenged control of his country.
    1. Extremist and moderate wings exist within the North Vietnamese party, but Ho keeps them in relative balance. A power struggle may well ensue after Ho dies.
    2. Ho has favored the more militant, pro-Chinese elements within the party during the past year, but moderates still manage to keep Hanoi from going as far as Peiping in attacking Moscow.
    3. The North Vietnamese have openly attacked modern revisionists as the main danger to international Communism, but they have refrained from attacking Khrushchev personally.

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4. North Vietnam depends on both China and the USSR for vital economic and political support. It would thus prefer to see the whole Sino-Soviet dispute swept under the rug.

II. Hanoi has publicly indicated its concern over the possibility of armed attacks directed against North Vietnam.

- A. While North Vietnamese officials have scoffed at suggestions that the US would launch attacks on the North and have boasted of their capability to crush any such attack, extensive defense measures have been taken against such a contingency.

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Haiphong harbor may have been mined for defensive purposes, regular troops have been deployed along key transportation routes into Laos, and air defense measures have been improved.

III. North Vietnam's regular army--the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)--is the fourth largest ground force in the Communist bloc and by far the most potent military force in Southeast Asia.

A. The force has a strength of about 225,000 troops and is organized into 14 infantry units, some of which are brigades and some of which are divisions. In addition, there is one artillery division, and several security regiments.

1. The disposition of these forces has remained relatively static in recent years. The main body of troops is located in the Hanoi delta area.

2. There are four brigades-divisions located in the Laos border area running south from Dien Bien Phu to the DMZ.

All have participated, at various times, in the fighting in Laos.

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3. The North Vietnamese can, when the occasion demands, rapidly introduce forces into Laos and withdraw them to the safehaven of North Vietnam. Thus, the number of North Vietnamese troops in Laos at any given time could vary between 3,000 and 10,000 depending on operational requirements.
4. North Vietnam has no tactical air force. It has, however, a number of transport aircraft--mostly IL-14's and LI'2's--largely left over from the Soviet airlift days. The North Vietnamese are probably capable of resuming an airlift on the scale of the Soviet airlift which operated between December 1960 and October 1962. A number of airfields capable of jet operations, however, do exist in North Vietnam.
5. North Vietnam's small naval force consists primarily of about 30 fast coastal patrol boats received from Communist China.

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IV. Continued severe agricultural difficulties do not appear to have hampered Hanoi's support for the war in the South.

A. Bad weather, coupled with mismanagement, has resulted in at least a 10 percent fall in the food harvest from the 1962 level.

1. The results of the 1964 fifth-month crop are not yet available but the regime has reportedly encountered some trouble in getting this year's planting done on time.

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